Gunston Classics

BERTIE CHANGES HIS MIND

P.G. WODEHOUSE

Gunston Classics

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BERTIE WOOSTER

Short Story

Bertie
Changes His Mind

Bertie

Changes His Mind

It has happened so frequently in the past few years that young fellows starting in my profession have come to me for a word of advice, that I've found it convenient now to condense my system into a brief formula. "Resource and Tact"—that is my motto. Tact, of course, has always been with me a *sine qua non*: while as for resource, I think I may say that I have usually contrived to show a certain modicum of what I might call finesse in handling those little contretemps which inevitably arise from time to time in the daily life of a gentleman's personal gentleman. I am reminded, just by way of an instance, of the Episode of the School for Young Ladies down Brighton—an affair which I think it may be said to have commenced one evening at the moment when I brought Mr. Wooster his whisky and siphon and he burst out at me with such remarkable petulance.

Not a little moody Mr. Wooster had been for some days—far from his usual bright self. This I had attributed to the natural reaction from a slight attack of influenza from which he had been suffering; and, of course, took no notice, merely performing my duties as usual, until on the evening of which I speak he exhibited this remarkable petulance when I brought him his whisky and siphon.

"Oh, dash it, Jeeves!" he said, manifestly overwrought. "I wish at least you'd put it on another table for a change."

"Sir?" I said.

"Every night, dash it all," proceeded Mr. Wooster morosely, "you come in at exactly the same old time with the same old tray and put it on the same old table. I'm fed up, I tell you. It's the bally monotony of it that makes it all seem so frightfully bally."

I confess that his words filled me with a certain apprehension. I had heard gentlemen in whose employment I've been talk in very much the same way before, and it had almost invariably meant that they were contemplating matrimony. It disturbed me, therefore, I'm free to admit, when Mr. Wooster addressed me in this fashion. I had no desire to sever a connection so pleasant in every respect as his and mine had been, and my experience is that when the wife comes in at the front door the valet of bachelor days goes out at the back.

"It's not your fault, of course," went on Mr. Wooster, regaining a certain degree of composure. "I'm not blaming you. But, by Jove, I mean, you must acknowledge—I mean to say, I've been thinking pretty deeply these last few days, Jeeves, and I've come to the conclusion mine is an empty life. I'm lonely, Jeeves."

"You have a great many friends, sir."

"What's the good of friends?"

"Emerson," I reminded him, "says a friend may well be reckoned the masterpiece of Nature, sir."

"Well, you can tell Emerson from me next time you see him that he's an ass."

"Very good, sir."

"What I want—Jeeves, have you seen that play called I-forget-its-dashed-name?"

"No, sir."

"It's on at the What-d'you-call-it. I went last night. The hero's a chap who's buzzing along, you know, quite merry and bright, and suddenly a kid turns up and says she's his

daughter. Left over from act one, you know—absolutely the first he'd heard of it. Well, of course, there's a bit of a fuss and they say to him, 'What-ho?' and he says, 'Well, what about it?' and they say, 'Well, *what* about it?' and he says, 'Oh, all right, then, if that's the way you feel!' and he takes the kid and goes off with her out into the world together, you know. Well, what I'm driving at, Jeeves, is that I envied that chappie. Most awfully jolly little girl, you know, clinging to him trustingly and whatnot. Something to look after, if you know what I mean. Jeeves, I wish I had a daughter. I wonder what the procedure is?"

"Marriage is, I believe, considered the preliminary step, sir."

"No, I mean about adopting a kid. You can adopt kids, you know, Jeeves. But what I want to know is how you start about it."

"The process, I should imagine, would be highly complicated and laborious, sir. It would cut into your spare time."

"Well, I'll tell you what I could do, then. My sister will be back from India next week with her three little girls. I'll give up this flat and take a house and have them all to live with me. By Jove, Jeeves, I think that's rather a scheme, what? Prattle of childish voices, eh? Little feet pattering hither and thither, yes?"

I concealed my perturbation, but the effort to preserve my sangfroid tested my powers to the utmost. The course of action outlined by Mr. Wooster meant the finish of our cosy bachelor establishment if it came into being as a practical proposition; and no doubt some men in my place would at this juncture have voiced their disapproval. I avoided this blunder.

"If you will pardon my saying so, sir," I suggested, "I think you are not quite yourself after your influenza. If I

might express the opinion, what you require is a few days by the sea. Brighton is very handy, sir."

"Are you suggesting that I'm talking through my hat?"

"By no means, sir. I merely advocate a short stay at Brighton as a physical recuperative."

Mr. Wooster considered.

"Well, I'm not sure you're not right," he said at length. "I *am* feeling more or less of an onion. You might shove a few things in a suitcase and drive me down in the car tomorrow."

"Very good, sir."

"And when we get back I'll be in the pink and ready to tackle this pattering-feet wheeze."

"Exactly, sir."

Well, it was a respite, and I welcomed it. But I began to see that a crisis had arisen which would require adroit handling. Rarely had I observed Mr. Wooster more set on a thing. Indeed, I could recall no such exhibition of determination on his part since the time when he had insisted, against my obvious disapproval, on wearing purple socks. However, I had coped successfully with that outbreak, and I was by no means unsanguine that I should eventually be able to bring the present affair to a happy issue. Employers are like horses. They require managing. Some gentlemen's personal gentlemen have the knack of managing them, some have not. I, I am happy to say, have no cause for complaint.

For myself, I found our stay at Brighton highly enjoyable, and should have been willing to extend it but Mr. Wooster, still restless, wearied of the place by the end of two days, and on the third afternoon he instructed me to pack up and bring the car round to the hotel. We started back along the London road at about five of a fine summer's day, and had travelled perhaps two miles when I perceived in the road before us a

young lady, gesticulating with no little animation. I applied the brake and brought the vehicle to a standstill.

"What," inquired Mr. Wooster, waking from a reverie, "is the big thought at the back of this, Jeeves?"

"I observed a young lady endeavouring to attract our attention with signals a little way down the road, sir," I explained. "She is now making her way towards us."

Mr. Wooster peered.

"I see her. I expect she wants a lift, Jeeves."

"That was the interpretation which I placed upon her actions, sir."

"A jolly-looking kid," said Mr. Wooster. "I wonder what she's doing, biffing about the high road."

"She has the air to me, sir, of one who has been absenting herself without leave from her school, sir."

"Hallo-allo-allo!" said Mr. Wooster, as the child reached us. "Do you want a lift?"

"Oh, I say, can you?" said the child, with marked pleasure.

"Where do you want to go?"

"There's a turning to the left about a mile farther on. If you'll put me down there, I'll walk the rest of the way. I say, thanks awfully. I've got a nail in my shoe."

She climbed in at the back. A red-haired young person with a snub nose and an extremely large grin. Her age, I should imagine, would be about twelve. She let down one of the spare seats, and knelt on it to facilitate conversation.

"I'm going to get into a frightful row," she began. "Miss Tomlinson will be perfectly furious."

"No, really?" said Mr. Wooster.

"It's a half-holiday, you know, and I sneaked away to Brighton, because I wanted to go on the pier and put pennies in the slot-machines. I thought I could get back in time so that nobody would notice I'd gone, but I got this nail in my shoe, and now there'll be a fearful row. Oh, well," she said,

with a philosophy which, I confess, I admired, "it can't be helped. What's your car? A Sunbeam, isn't it? We've got a Wolseley at home."

Mr. Wooster was visibly perturbed. As I have indicated, he was at this time in a highly malleable frame of mind, tenderhearted to a degree where the young of the female sex were concerned. Her sad case touched him deeply.

"Oh, I say, this is rather rotten," he observed. "Isn't there anything to be done? I say, Jeeves, don't you think something could be done?"

"It was not my place to make the suggestion, sir," I replied, "but, as you yourself have brought the matter up, I fancy the trouble is susceptible of adjustment. I think it would be a legitimate subterfuge were you to inform the young lady's schoolmistress that you are an old friend of the young lady's father. In this case you could inform Miss Tomlinson that you had been passing the school and had seen the young lady at the gate and taken her for a drive. Miss Tomlinson's chagrin would no doubt in these circumstances be sensibly diminished if not altogether dispersed."

"Well, you *are* a sportsman!" observed the young person, with great enthusiasm. And she proceeded to kiss me—in connection with which I have only to say that I was sorry she had just been devouring some sticky species of sweetmeat.

"Jeeves, you've hit it!" said Mr. Wooster. "A sound, even fruity, scheme. I say, I suppose I'd better know your name and all that, if I'm a friend of your father's."

"My name's Peggy Mainwaring, thanks awfully," said the young person. "And my father's Professor Mainwaring. He's written a lot of books. You'll be expected to know that."

"Author of the well-known series of philosophical treatises, sir," I said. "They have a great vogue, though, if the young lady will pardon my saying so, many of the Professor's

opinions strike me personally as somewhat empirical. Shall I drive on to the school, sir?"

"Yes, carry on. I say, Jeeves, it's a rummy thing. Do you know, I've never been inside a girls' school in my life."

"Indeed, sir?"

"Ought to be a dashed interesting experience, Jeeves, what?"

"I fancy that you may find it so, sir," I said.

We drove on a matter of half a mile down a lane, and, directed by the young person, I turned in at the gates of a house of imposing dimensions, bringing the car to a halt at the front door. Mr. Wooster and the child went in, and presently a parlourmaid came out.

"You're to take the car round to the stables, please," she said.

"Ah! Then everything is satisfactory, eh? Where has Mr. Wooster gone?"

"Miss Peggy has taken him off to meet her friends. And cook says she hopes you'll step round to the kitchen later and have a cup of tea."

"Inform her that I shall be delighted. Before I take the car to the stables, would it be possible for me to have a word with Miss Tomlinson?"

A moment later I was following her into the drawing-room.

Handsome but strong-minded—that was how I summed up Miss Tomlinson at first glance. In some ways she recalled to my mind Mr. Wooster's Aunt Agatha. She had the same penetrating gaze and that indefinable air of being reluctant to stand any nonsense.

"I fear I am possibly taking a liberty, madam," I began, "but I am hoping that you will allow me to say a word with respect to my employer. I fancy I am correct in supposing that Mr. Wooster did not tell you a great deal about himself?"

"He told me nothing about himself, except that he was a friend of Professor Mainwaring."

"He did not inform you, then, that he was *the* Mr. Wooster?"

"*The* Mr. Wooster?"

"Bertram Wooster, madam."

I will say for Mr. Wooster that, mentally negligible though he no doubt is, he has a name that suggests almost infinite possibilities. He sounds, if I may elucidate my meaning, like Someone—especially if you've just been told he's an intimate friend of Professor Mainwaring. You might not, no doubt, be able to say offhand whether he was Bertram Wooster the novelist, or Bertram Wooster the founder of a new school of thought, but you would have an uneasy feeling that you were exposing your ignorance if you did not give the impression of familiarity with the name. Miss Tomlinson, as I had rather foreseen, nodded brightly.

"Oh, *Bertram* Wooster!" she said.

"He is an extremely retiring gentleman, madam, and would be the last to suggest it himself, but, knowing him as I do, I am sure that he would take it as a graceful compliment if you were to ask him to address the young ladies. He is an excellent extempore speaker."

"A very good idea," said Miss Tomlinson, decidedly. "I am very much obliged to you for suggesting it. I will certainly ask him to talk to the girls."

"And should he make a pretence—through modesty—of not wishing—"

"I shall insist!"

"Thank you, madam. I am obliged. You will not mention my share in the matter? Mr. Wooster might think that I had exceeded my duties."

I drove round to the stables and halted the car in the yard. As I got out, I looked at it somewhat intently. It was a good car, and appeared to be in excellent condition, but

somehow I seemed to feel that something was going to go wrong with it—something pretty serious—something that wouldn't be able to be put right again for at least a couple of hours.

One gets these presentiments.

It may have been some half-hour later that Mr. Wooster came into the stable-yard as I was leaning against the car and enjoying a quiet cigarette.

"No, don't chuck it away, Jeeves," he said, as I withdrew the cigarette from my mouth. "As a matter of fact, I've come to touch you for a smoke. Got one to spare?"

"Only gaspers, I fear, sir."

"They'll do," responded Mr. Wooster, with no little eagerness. I observed that his manner was a trifle fatigued and his eye somewhat wild. "It's a rummy thing, Jeeves, I seem to have lost my cigarette-case. Can't find it anywhere."

"I am sorry to hear that, sir. It is not in the car."

"No? Must have dropped it somewhere, then." He drew at his gasper with relish. "Jolly creatures, small girls, Jeeves," he remarked, after a pause.

"Extremely so, sir."

"Of course, I can imagine some fellows finding them a bit exhausting in—er—"

"En masse, sir?"

"That's the word. A bit exhausting en masse."

"I must confess, sir, that that is how they used to strike me. In my younger days, at the outset of my career, sir, I was at one time pageboy in a school for young ladies."

"No, really? I never knew that before. I say, Jeeves—er—did the—er—dear little souls *giggle* much in your day?"

"Practically without cessation, sir."

"Makes a fellow feel a bit of an ass, what? I shouldn't wonder if they usedn't to stare at you from time to time, too, eh?"

"At the school where I was employed, sir, the young ladies had a regular game which they were accustomed to play when a male visitor arrived. They would stare fixedly at him and giggle, and there was a small prize for the one who made him blush first."

"Oh, no, I say, Jeeves, not really?"

"Yes, sir. They derived great enjoyment from the pastime."

"I'd no idea small girls were such demons."

"More deadly than the male, sir."

Mr. Wooster passed a handkerchief over his brow.

"Well, we're going to have tea in a few minutes, Jeeves. I expect I shall feel better after tea."

"We will hope so, sir."

But I was by no means sanguine.

I had an agreeable tea in the kitchen. The buttered toast was good and the maids nice girls, though with little conversation. The parlourmaid, who joined us towards the end of the meal, after performing her duties in the school dining-room, reported that Mr. Wooster was sticking it pluckily, but seemed feverish. I went back to the stable-yard, and I was just giving the car another look-over when the small Mainwaring child appeared.

"Oh, I say," she said, "will you give this to Mr. Wooster when you see him?" She held out Mr. Wooster's cigarette-case. "He must have dropped it somewhere. I say," she proceeded, "it's an awful lark. He's going to give a lecture to the school."

"Indeed, miss?"

"We love it when there are lectures. We sit and stare at the poor dears, and try to make them dry up. There was a man last term who got hiccups. Oh, do you think Mr. Wooster will get hiccups?"

"We can but hope for the best, miss."

"It would be such a lark, wouldn't it?"

"Highly enjoyable, miss."

"Well, I must be getting back. I want to get a front seat."

And she scampered off. An engaging child. Full of spirits.

She had hardly gone when there was an agitated noise, and round the corner came Mr. Wooster. Perturbed. Deeply so.

"Jeeves!"

"Sir?"

"Start the car!"

"Sir?"

"I'm off!"

"Sir?"

Mr. Wooster danced a few steps.

"Don't stand there saying 'sir?' I tell you I'm off. Bally off! There's not a moment to waste. The situation's desperate. Dash it, Jeeves, do you know what's happened? The Tomlinson female has just sprung it on me that I'm expected to make a speech to the girls! Got to stand up there in front of the whole dashed collection and talk! I can just see myself! Get that car going, Jeeves, dash it all. A little speed, a little speed!"

"Impossible, I fear, sir. The car is out of order."

Mr. Wooster gaped at me. Very glassily he gaped.

"Out of order!"

"Yes, sir. Something is wrong. Trivial, perhaps, but possibly a matter of some little time to repair." Mr. Wooster being one of those easygoing young gentlemen who'll drive a car but never take the trouble to learn anything about its mechanism, I felt justified in becoming technical. "I think it is the differential gear, sir. Either that or the exhaust."

I'm fond of Mr. Wooster, and I admit I came very near to melting as I looked at his face. He was staring at me in a sort of dumb despair that would have touched anybody.

"Then I'm sunk! Or"—a slight gleam of hope flickered across his drawn features—"do you think I could sneak out and leg it across country, Jeeves?"

"Too late, I fear, sir." I indicated with a slight gesture the approaching figure of Miss Tomlinson, who was advancing with a serene determination in his immediate rear.

"Ah, there you are, Mr. Wooster."

He smiled a sickly smile.

"Yes—er—here I am!"

"We are all waiting for you in the large schoolroom."

"But, I say, look here," said Mr. Wooster, "I—I don't know a bit what to talk about."

"Why, anything, Mr. Wooster. Anything that comes into your head. Be bright," said Miss Tomlinson. "Bright and amusing."

"Oh, bright and amusing?"

"Possibly tell them a few entertaining stories. But, at the same time, do not neglect the graver note. Remember that my girls are on the threshold of life, and will be eager to hear something brave and helpful and stimulating—something which they can remember in after years. But, of course, you know the sort of thing, Mr. Wooster. Come. The young people are waiting."

I have spoken earlier of resource and the part it plays in the life of a gentleman's personal gentleman. It is a quality peculiarly necessary if one is to share in scenes not primarily designed for one's cooperation. So much that is interesting in life goes on apart behind closed doors that your gentleman's gentleman, if he is not to remain hopelessly behind the march of events, should exercise his wits in order to enable himself to be—if not a spectator—at least an auditor when there is anything of interest toward. I deprecate as both vulgar and undignified the practice of listening at keyholes,

but without lowering myself to that, I have generally contrived to find a way.

In the present case it was simple. The large schoolroom was situated on the ground floor, with commodious French windows, which, as the weather was clement, remained open throughout the proceedings. By stationing myself behind a pillar on the porch or veranda which adjoined the room, I was enabled to see and hear all. It was an experience which I should be sorry to have missed. Mr. Wooster, I may say at once, indubitably excelled himself.

Mr. Wooster is a young gentleman with practically every desirable quality except one. I do not mean brains, for in an employer brains are not desirable. The quality to which I allude is hard to define, but perhaps I might call it the gift of dealing with the Unusual Situation. In the presence of the Unusual, Mr. Wooster is too prone to smile weakly and allow his eyes to protrude. He lacks Presence. I have often wished that I had the power to bestow upon him some of the savoir-faire of a former employer of mine, Mr. Montague-Todd, the well-known financier, now in the second year of his sentence. I have known men call upon Mr. Todd with the express intention of horsewhipping him and go away half an hour later laughing heartily and smoking one of his cigars. To Mr. Todd it would have been child's play to speak a few impromptu words to a schoolroom full of young ladies; in fact, before he had finished, he would probably have induced them to invest all their pocket-money in one of his numerous companies, but to Mr. Wooster it was plainly an ordeal of the worst description. He gave one look at the young ladies, who were all staring at him in an extremely unwinking manner, blinked, and started to pick feebly at his coat-sleeve. His aspect reminded me of that of a bashful young man who has been persuaded against his better judgment to go on the platform and assist a conjurer in his entertainment, suddenly

discovers rabbits and hard-boiled eggs are being taken out of the top of his head.

The proceeding opened with a short but graceful speech of introduction from Miss Tomlinson.

"Girls, some of you have already met Mr. Wooster—Mr. *Bertram* Wooster, and you all, I hope, know him by reputation." Here Mr. Wooster gave a hideous, gurgling laugh and, catching Miss Tomlinson's eye, turned a bright scarlet. Miss Tomlinson resumed. "He has very kindly consented to say a few words to you before he leaves, and I am sure that you will all give him your very earnest attention. Now, please."

She gave a spacious gesture with her right hand as she said the last two words, and Mr. Wooster, under the impression that they were addressed to him, cleared his throat and began to speak. But it appeared that her remark was directed to the young ladies, and was in the nature of a cue or signal, for she had no sooner spoken them than the whole school rose to its feet in a body and burst into a species of chant, of which I am glad to say I can remember the words, though the tune eludes me. The words ran as follows—

"Many greetings to you!
Many greetings to you!
Many greetings, dear stranger,
Many greetings,
Many greetings,
Many greetings to you!
Many greetings to you!
To you!"

Considerable latitude of choice was given to the singers in the matter of key, and there was little of what I might call cooperative effort. Each child went on till she had reached the end, then stopped and waited for the stragglers to come up. It was an unusual performance, and I, personally, found

it extremely exhilarating. It seemed to smite Mr. Wooster, however, like a blow. He recoiled a couple of steps and flung up an arm defensively. Then the uproar died away, and an air of expectancy fell upon the room. Miss Tomlinson directed a brightly authoritative gaze upon Mr. Wooster, and he blinked, gulped once or twice, and tottered forward.

"Well, you know—" said Mr. Wooster.

Then it seemed to strike him that this opening lacked the proper formal dignity.

"Ladies—"

A silvery peal of laughter from the front row stopped him again.

"Girls!" said Miss Tomlinson. She spoke in a low, soft voice, but the effect was immediate. Perfect stillness instantly descended upon all present. I am bound to say that, brief as my acquaintance with Miss Tomlinson had been, I could recall few women I had admired more. She had grip.

I fancy that Miss Tomlinson had gauged Mr. Wooster's oratorical capabilities pretty correctly by this time, and had come to the conclusion that nothing much in the way of a stirring address was to be expected from him.

"Perhaps," she said, "as it is getting late, and he has not very much time to spare, Mr. Wooster will just give you some little word of advice which may be helpful to you in after-life, and then we will sing the school song and disperse to our evening lessons."

She looked at Mr. Wooster. Mr. Wooster passed a finger round the inside of his collar.

"Advice? After-life? What? Well, I don't know—"

"Just some brief word of counsel, Mr. Wooster," said Miss Tomlinson, firmly.

"Oh, well—Well, yes—Well—" It was painful to see Mr. Wooster's brain endeavouring to work. "Well, I'll tell you something that's often done *me* a bit of good, and it's a thing not many people know. My old Uncle Henry gave me the tip

when I first came to London. 'Never forget, my boy,' he said, 'that, if you stand outside Romano's in the Strand, you can see the clock on the wall of the Law Courts down in Fleet Street. Most people who don't know don't believe it's possible, because there are a couple of churches in the middle of the road, and you would think they would be in the way. But you can, and it's worth knowing. You can win a lot of money betting on it with fellows who haven't found it out.' And, by Jove, he was perfectly right, and it's a thing to remember. Many a quid have I—"

Miss Tomlinson gave a hard, dry cough, and Mr. Wooster stopped in the middle of a sentence.

"Perhaps it will be better, Mr. Wooster," she said, in a cold, even voice, "if you were to tell my girls some little story. What you say is, no doubt, extremely interesting, but perhaps a little—"

"Oh, ah, yes," said Mr. Wooster. "Story? Story?" He appeared completely distraught, poor young gentleman. "I wonder if you've heard the one about the stockbroker and the chorus-girl?"

"We will now sing the school song," said Miss Tomlinson, rising like an iceberg.

I decided not to remain for the singing of the school song. It seemed probable to me that Mr. Wooster would shortly be requiring the car, so I made my way back to the stable-yard, to be in readiness.

I had not long to wait. In a very few moments Mr. Wooster came tottering up. Mr. Wooster's is not one of those inscrutable faces which it is impossible to read. On the contrary, it is a limpid pool in which is mirrored each passing emotion. I could read it now like a book, and his first words were very much on the lines I had anticipated.

"Jeeves," he said, hoarsely, "is that damned car mended yet?"

"Just this moment, sir. I have been working on it assiduously."

"Then, for heaven's sake, let's go!"

"But I understood that you were to address the young ladies, sir."

"Oh, I've done that!" responded Mr. Wooster, blinking twice with extraordinary rapidity. "Yes, I've done that."

"It was a success, I hope, sir?"

"Oh, yes. Oh, yes. Most extraordinarily successful. Went like a breeze. But—er—I think I may as well be going. No use outstaying one's welcome, what?"

"Assuredly not, sir."

I had climbed into my seat and was about to start the engine, when voices made themselves heard; and at the first sound of them Mr. Wooster sprang with almost incredible nimbleness into the tonneau, and when I glanced round he was on the floor covering himself with a rug. The last I saw of him was a pleading eye.

"Have you seen Mr. Wooster, my man?" Miss Tomlinson had entered the stable-yard, accompanied by a lady of, I should say, judging from her accent, French origin.

"No, madam."

The French lady uttered some exclamation in her native tongue.

"Is anything wrong, madam?" I inquired.

Miss Tomlinson in normal mood was, I should be disposed to imagine, a lady who would not readily confide her troubles to the ear of a gentleman's gentleman, however sympathetic his aspect. That she did so now was sufficient indication of the depth to which she was stirred.

"Yes, there is! Mademoiselle has just found several of the girls smoking cigarettes in the shrubbery. When questioned, they stated that Mr. Wooster had given them the horrid things." She turned. "He must be in the garden somewhere,

or in the house. I think the man is out of his senses. Come, mademoiselle!"

It must have been about a minute later that Mr. Wooster poked his head out of the rug like a tortoise.

"Jeeves!"

"Sir?"

"Get a move on! Start her up! Get going and *keep* going!"

I trod on the self-starter.

"It would perhaps be safest to drive carefully until we are out of the school grounds, sir," I said. "I might run over one of the young ladies, sir."

"Well, what's the objection to that?" demanded Mr. Wooster, with extraordinary bitterness.

"Or even Miss Tomlinson, sir."

"Don't!" said Mr. Wooster, wistfully. "You make my mouth water!"

"Jeeves," said Mr. Wooster, when I brought him his whisky and siphon one night about a week later, "this is dashed jolly."

"Sir?"

"Jolly. Cosy and pleasant, you know. I mean, looking at the clock and wondering if you're going to be late with the good old drinks, and then you coming in with the tray always exactly on time, never a minute late, and shoving it down on the table and biffing off, and the next night coming in and shoving it down and biffing off, and the next night—I mean, gives you a sort of safe, restful feeling. Soothing! That's the word. Soothing!"

"Yes, sir. Oh, by the way, sir—"

"Well?"

"Have you succeeded in finding a suitable house yet, sir?"

"House? What do you mean, house?"

"I understood, sir, that it was your intention to give up the flat and take a house of sufficient size to enable you to

have your sister, Mrs. Scholfield, and her three young ladies to live with you."

Mr. Wooster shuddered strongly.

"That's off, Jeeves," he said.

"Very good, sir," I replied.

THE END

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BY
P.G. WODEHOUSE

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Short Stories